

Drama on 40th floor of Waldorf

How General Dynamics weaned Roger Lewis away from Pan American to replace Frank Pace as top man.

His job: to cure the losing transport plane business

About three months ago, a tall, athletic man of about 50 pushed the buzzer beside the white-and-gold double doors of suite 40-H of New York's Waldorf Astoria Tower. Waiting for him inside were Henry Crown, chief stockholder of General Dynamics Corp., and four other members of GD's now legendary executive committee.

Crown had set up the committee to do something about the fantastic losses that General Dynamics was suffering in producing commercial jet planes [B17 Aug 12/61 p28]. For months, the committee had been making day-to-day operating decisions and reshuffling top management. Now it was getting around to finding a replacement for Frank

Pace, Jr., chairman and chief executive officer, who was to be let go by the company.

The buzzer pusher was Roger Lewis, executive vice-president for administration at Pan American World Airways and a leading candidate to succeed Pace. Here's how Crown, still occupying the same suite, describes this first meeting with the man who was to get the job.

"He sat in a chair in this room," Crown related, "and we told him we were considering him as president. We didn't want him to say anything at all. We didn't ask him if he was interested, either. We wanted him to check. And we wanted to check him. At the time, I knew who he was, but



Roger Lewis, GD's new boss-to-be

had never met him; and we wanted to be sure."

News leaks out. Crown says that Lewis never mentioned the meeting, even at Pan American where he was regarded as heir apparent to Pres. Juan T. Trippe, the founder. But the news got out—Crown says Trippe heard about it from Pace himself—

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